



# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF **ENERGY**

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## **“Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century!”: Half-century Old Reactor Gets Wired to Increase Worker Productivity, Safety**

**Aiken, SC** -- After more than half a century since its construction and more than four decades since last operation, the Department of Energy’s (DOE) Savannah River Site (SRS) R Reactor has taken a leap forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with the installation of a wireless Intranet service by a local small business.

As SRS American Recovery and Reinvestment Act teams descended on two of DOE’s retired nuclear weapons production reactors in R Area to complete their final closure, logistical challenges began to emerge. Workers were unable to access SRSnet, a system used for collecting radiological data, time-keeping, safety documentation, and other essential data needs. That meant more than 75 remote workers were required to report approximately two miles away, twice daily, for radiological control accountability using software that could only be accessed via the SRSnet.

To overcome this productivity challenge, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), DOE’s management and operating contractor at SRS, partnered with Advanced Technology Group, a small business owned by a local Native American woman, to install a wireless system, while SRNS handled infrastructure and tower installation. The project cost about \$250,000 and was funded under the Recovery Act.

“In addition to putting hardworking Americans back on the job, the Recovery Act is helping to improve productivity at some of our most remote work sites. The implementation of wireless technology at R Reactor will undoubtedly showcase the benefits of incorporating technology across the Savannah River Site, allowing us to improve safety, accountability and productivity while ensuring that we continue to make each tax dollar go as far as possible,” said Zack Smith, DOE’s Federal Project Director of the SRS Recovery Act Project.

The first email was sent from within the remote boundaries of R Area on February 18, 2010. It was addressed to Mary Flora, director of Area Completion Projects, who responded, “Welcome to the 21<sup>st</sup> century!”

Seeing success in R Area, SRNS quickly realized that other areas could also benefit from upgraded technology. Steps are currently being taken to permit workers in F and H Tank Farms to collect radiological data via SRSnet, rather than traditional data gathering performed with hand-held instruments. This improvement will also reduce health risks associated with data collection in radiological areas.

The new easy-to-configure system not only solves an immediate and complex business problem but can be relocated to other areas in the future, saving time and tax dollars without sacrificing worker safety and productivity.

“The introduction of local wireless SRSnet access at some of SRS’s most remote areas has evolved into a greater return on investment than we originally anticipated. We quickly realized that day-to-day work activities for hundreds of SRS employees could be improved, both inside the reactor area and at other remote sites. We are excited that we have conquered the immediate challenge and in-turn, improved operations for numerous organizations at SRS,” said Rich Slocum, vice president of the Recovery Act Portfolio at SRNS.

For additional information on the Department of Energy’s Office of Environmental Management and the Savannah River Site, can be found at <http://www.em.doe.gov> or <http://www.srs.gov>. For more information about the SRS Recovery Act Project, please visit [www.srs.gov/recovery](http://www.srs.gov/recovery).

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